

Washington State Department of Health
Infant at Work Program
Questions and Answers

ELIGIBILITY/APPROVAL

Q. Who is eligible to participate in this program?

A. Permanent Department of Health (DOH) employees (must have completed their probationary period) who are new mothers, fathers, or legal guardians are eligible to participate.

Q. Do I need to obtain permission from my supervisor to participate in this program?

A. Participants are required to submit an Individual Plan that is required to be approved by their supervisor, Office Director, and Appointing Authority.

Q. Am I able to bring my baby to work with me to any work location of Department of Health (DOH)?

A. No, any work location or position in which it is physically unsafe for the baby, such as working directly in the public Health Lab, will not be allowed. We will advise on a case by case basis if you work up at the public health lab, but strictly in an office environment.

Q. Am I able to work from home while participating in the program?

A. Yes! If your position allows you the ability to work from home and your supervisor has given permission to work from home you are allowed to care for your baby during the time that you are enrolled in the program.

Q. Is there a certain age the infant must be in order to participate?

A. Eligible infants must be at least six weeks old and no older than six months.

Q. If I have twins can I bring both children to the workplace?

A. Under our policy you are only able to bring in one child at a time.

Q. Who is my point of contact for the program?

A. [Kim Kenderesi](#) in the Office of Human Resources manages FMLA, shared leave and other benefits. She can work with you on the program as well as any related questions regarding maternity and paternity leave. You can also contact your program Human Resource Consultant.

Q. I am currently expecting a baby. But, not knowing the baby's temperament or health conditions now, can I wait to sign up? And can I try it first to make sure the program works for me?

A. Absolutely! This program is not for everyone. Please note that in order to try out the program you will still need to complete the Individual Plan and receive approval from your supervisor, Office Director,

and Appointing Authority. This is just one more option available to employees to choose from and we expect and support parents returning to work after leave without their children as well as those taking paid/unpaid maternity and paternity leave. We also support parents trying the program – even if they find it isn't right for them.

Q. Do I have to participate full-time?

A. Absolutely not! We anticipate that many employees won't participate full-time. Many of you will combine time at home with coming into work to stay engaged and keep up specific duties. We are also hoping to receive approval to expand our telework policy allowing eligible employees to combine telework with the Infant at Work program (specific to care of infants six weeks to six months).

CARE FOR BABY

Q. If I bring a portable changing pad, can I change my baby at my work station?

A. Changing tables have been installed for this purpose in the woman's and men's restroom on each floor in each building (PPE, TC1, TC2 and TC3), except for the first floor bathrooms due to the shower facilities. Each of the Tumwater office locations also have changing tables in the public restrooms, located on the first floor. Diapers should be changed in the restroom only and not at your work station.

Q. Can I dispose of diapers in DOH garbage containers?

A. The Infant at Work Policy requires that you provide your own diaper container for disposal of diapers, and take them home with you at the end of the day.

Q. Where will my baby sleep?

A. We won't have designated areas for baby to sleep. As stated in the policy, you will need to bring any equipment necessary to provide a safe and supportive sleep environment in your workstation or office. This program allows babies to be close to their parents and guardians, so we expect and support seeing participants performing their work with their babies sleeping in front/back carriers right next to their loved ones.

Q. The policy says if my baby is disruptive for a prolonged period of time or causes a distraction I need to take him/her home. What does this mean?

A. We know babies will cry when they are hungry, need to be changed and/or comforted. If you've met all of those needs, we encourage you to walk away from the work area with your infant, even outside to help calm them. We know that some days all of these options may not work and know participants may need to take their baby home for the day.

Q. The policy says I can flex my hours or submit leave to accommodate loss of productivity. What does this mean?

A. We know you will be working and caring for your baby. However, if you bring your baby to work and spend excessive time diapering, caring, feeding you will adjust your work hours appropriately.

FACILITIES

Q. What should I do if my baby has a feeding or diapering accident in the building?

A. Please disinfect surfaces with cleaning wipes provided in your nearest supply area. For bigger accidents or if accidents happen on any fabric area please disinfect the area the best you can and notify Facilities at 360-236-3900 to deep clean the area.

Q. What will the agency do to accommodate the equipment I need to care for my baby?

A. As an agency our facilities are at full capacity and we are unable to provide each participating employee with additional space for baby equipment. Please be mindful that whatever equipment you bring will need to fit safely into your work space.

Q. Is there special parking for parents who participate in the Infant at Work Program?

A. Yes, for Tumwater participants there are designated parking spaces located in the parking garage and in front of PPE. In the parking garage there will be two parking spots on the third floor, and two parking spots on the fourth floor. They are located nearest the north and south elevator/stairwell. At PPE there will be two parking spots available. Each parking spot will be designated by a sign that reads “Infant at Work Program”

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Q. I worry about people coming to work ill. Will I be notified if the agency is notified of workplace exposures to more serious communicable illnesses?

A. Yes. Participants in this program will be notified if **we are aware** of a more serious workplace exposure such as pertussis. As a reminder, vaccines are a cornerstone to public health. They prevent many diseases that can be especially dangerous for babies (under six months). Having a baby in the office is a great reminder that getting immunized is the best protection.

For less serious illnesses, we recommend offices and divisions send an email to all staff letting them know there will be a baby in the office and that people who think they may be contagious should stay home.

Q. How can I help protect my baby from illnesses at work?

A. There are several things you can do to help protect your baby from illnesses:

- Get immunized against flu and pertussis. Take advantage of employee flu/Tdap vaccination clinics offered each fall. Contact [Kim Conception](#) for information regarding employee flu clinics.
- Wash your hands often, especially after changing diapers and before feeding your baby. Ask others who hold or care for your baby to also wash their hands before touching your baby.
- Ask your co-workers not to touch or come near your baby if they're ill or not immunized against flu and pertussis. These diseases are highly contagious and especially dangerous for babies.
- Make sure people who care for your baby are immunized against flu and pertussis. This is called “cocooning”.
- Immunize your baby on time with [recommended vaccines](#).

Q. What if there is a fire or an earthquake? Are there special procedures that I should follow?

A. As part of the process when you start the program, you will be asked to notify Neil Good in the Office of Risk Management to schedule a time for a workstation safety inspection. Neil will meet with you to inspect your workstation and talk briefly about safety and security procedures. You will also be notified by the Safety Committee Chair for your building who will discuss your specific needs for an evacuation of the building.

Q. Do I have to check-in with the Security Guard every day when I bring in my infant?

A. No, the Office of Risk Management will notify the Security Guard about your location with an infant. HR will notify Risk Management when there is a change in your status who will in turn, notify the Security Guard.

RESOURCES:

- Facilities: 360-236-3900
- [Infant at Work Policy](#)
- [Individual Plan](#)
- [Child Profile Health Promotion information](#); includes health, safety, and development information for children aged birth to six years of age.